

Director - Background Notes

- Milos Forman grew up in the Czech Republic (known as Czechoslovakia at the time), a country affected by various political and cultural systems over time.
- His parents perished in concentration camps in World War II
- After WWII - Communist invasion controlled his country
- Forman was in Paris at this time negotiating his first American film. He was told he was in the country illegally and forced to immigrate to New York
- His first film was critically acclaimed but not Box Office material – it dramatised a rebellion against an oppressive bureaucracy. It epitomised his insistence upon individual rights, self-expression and freedom. Knowing his country's history we can see what has influenced him

The conception of the film version of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest – Background Notes

- Kirk Douglas bought rights to Ken Kesey's book and contacted Forman for assistance with a film version. A promised copy of the novel never reached him, and it wasn't until Michael Douglas contacted him years later that they realised it had been confiscated at the time.
- The only known actor of the film at the time was Jack Nicholson. Over 1000 actors were auditioned for the parts of 'loonies'. Nicholson thought these loonies were the real deal!

The title

- The film's name comes from a Mother Goose nursery rhyme:

**"Vintery, mintery, cutery, corn, Apple seed and apple thorn
Wire, briar, limber lock, Three geese in a flock
One flew east, and one flew west,
And one flew over the cuckoo's nest"**

- The West and The East are opposites, as are Nurse Ratched and Mac (as are Czech and USA!)
- Cuckoo birds are known for laying their eggs in other birds' nests.
- Their eggs are large and as they develop, they push other eggs from the nest.
- They are dominating eggs and create mayhem for the mother bird, creating change by using their force to change the environment and affecting all the other eggs surrounding.
- Why is this significant for the film? Who flew over the nest in the end?

Some questions to think about

- ***What is the point of this movie?***
- Who was crazy? Who wasn't? Why were most patients there if they didn't have to be?
- Why did Chief Bromden pretend to be deaf and dumb?
- Why are all the orderlies black?
- Why would mental institutions not have more measures in place?
- Why didn't Mac leave when he had the chance?
- Why did Billy kill himself?
- Did Nurse Ratched change after Billy's death?
- Why did Chief kill Mac?
- Why was Taber the patient most excited when Chief escaped?